



UpCounty Region Recreation Advisory Board Annual Report



Sept. 2007 - June 2008



Montgomery County Executive

Isiah Leggett

Montgomery County Council

Michael Knapp, President

Phil Andrews

Roger Berliner

Marc Erlich

Valerie Ervin

Nancy Floreen

George Levant

Marilyn and Donald Praisner

Duchy Trachtenberg

Upcounty Region Recreation Advisory Board Membership, FY08

Lou Sousa, Chairman, Clarksburg
Tim Truman, Vice Chairman, Gaithersburg
John Cabrera, Germantown
Bob Caverly, Boyds
Stan Fisher, Boyds
Daniel Johnston, North Potomac
Valerie Oliver, Germantown
Dipali Shah, Boyds
Ed Socha, Germantown

Board Members who retired from the Board in FY08

Anwar Masood, Clarksburg
Scott McKernon, Germantown
Alla Safir-Krause, North Potomac

Board Liaisons

Sandra Kaiser, Recreation Department Liaison
Barbara Lipps, Recreation Department Liaison
Clare Runkles, Parks Department Liaison
Joel Cockrell, Upcounty Citizens Advisory Board Liaison

Upcounty Region Recreation Area Boundaries

The Upcounty Region Recreation area boundaries align with the Upcounty Regional Services Center area boundaries. This area includes the neighborhoods of Germantown, Gaithersburg, Barnesville, Laytonsville, Poolesville, Clarksburg, Damascus and North Potomac. The service area comprises approximately ½ of Montgomery County and is bordered on the north by Frederick & Howard Counties, on the west & south by the Potomac River, on the south & east by Rockville and Route 124.

Upcounty Region Recreation Advisory Board FY08 Annual Report

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Executive Summary

The thrust of the Upcounty Region Recreation Advisory Board in FY08 was to improve the nine board members' individual and collective understanding of the extended and complex Parks and Recreation 'enterprise' in the county. The majority of URRAB members were fairly new to the Board and we felt that, in order to effectively speak for over 300,000 upcounty residents, we first needed to 'do our homework' about the county's 'RexParx enterprise.' Hence, over a dozen invited speakers, including the Directors of both the Parks and Recreation Departments, provided us informative briefings on topics ranging across the breadth of these two departments. URRAB in turn used these briefings to help inform our four official statements summarizing our capital and operating budget priorities at various County Government hearings.

For capital budgeting, **URRAB's #1 priority is implementing the Little Bennett Master Plan by providing FY09 funding support to start work on the Park's gateway entrance area and to rebuild the multi-use trails in Little Bennett** so they are less prone to erosion. Currently, Little Bennett -- the county's most pristine and natural park -- is the only one among the County's five regional parks without a nature center, a naturalist, or even a central public entrance or parking area.

Our second CIP priority is to help address the fact that the rapid growth in upcounty population has not yet been matched by the construction of new county recreation facilities able to meet our citizens' recreation needs. To help correct this imbalance, we strongly support moving forward with:

- Renovation and expansion of the **Plum Gar Recreation Center** in Germantown;
- Construction of the **new recreation center in Darnestown** as proposed in the CIP;
- And the conduct of **preliminary planning** studies for:
 - A new recreation center in **East Germantown** as proposed in the city's new master plan;
 - The proposed **Clarksburg Community Recreation Center**; and,
 - An **upcounty indoor swim center for citizens who live east of I-270** and currently lack access to any nearby public indoor swim facility.

Our third capital project priority is to fund an expansion of the Black Hills Park visitor center so that it can keep pace with the demand for its services caused by the growth in Germantown and other upcounty communities.

Next, we would like to see **continued strengthening of the Park Department's trails budget**. The combined acreage of all the great parks around the upcounty represents the principal strength our region brings to the County's total recreation picture. Therefore, we would like to see enhanced support for trails and bikeways to connect these parks into a more integrated network.

Our board's **top priorities** relative to the FY09 **Operating Budget** are:

- **After school programs** – these vital programs require additional staff and seasonal budgets.
- **Summer youth programs** – summer programs, especially summer fun centers, are more popular than ever, and more staff and resources are required to open additional programs with extended hours.
- **Funding seasonal staff** – additional funding for the seasonal staff is required to meet the expanding recreational needs of Upcounty citizens.
- **Public Safety** – any increase in usage of Upcounty parks and recreation facilities leads to an **increased need for park police** that patrol these areas and keep our citizens safe.

URRAB FY08 Objectives

- The County Government's "Policies and Procedures" for participation on Montgomery County Boards, Committees and Commissions states that *"The goal of these bodies is to provide a valuable service to the community by presenting the concerns and viewpoints of County residents on a variety of issues"*
- To have a meaningful impact, URRAB members must be informed about the broad portfolio of Recreation and Parks' activities and facilities in our area
- Board should be knowledgeable about how upcounty residents feel about our programs, activities and facilities
- Members should have an interest in Recreation and Parks topics and issues, and as stated in the County's Policies and Procedures guidelines, up to three excused absences are allowed for a member in a Board year
- Board Chairman Lou Sousa emphasized the need for Board members to be better informed about:
 - Recreation and parks facilities and programs, and
 - How upcounty residents feel about these facilities and programs
- Sousa said that he planned to invite guest speakers from throughout the Recreation and Parks Departments to address the Board this year
- This could help provide both individual Board members as well as the Board collectively with improved knowledge about the "RexParx enterprise"
- Sousa also suggested that the Board consider:
 - Ways to improve outreach to upcounty residents, and
 - The possibility of holding 3 or 4 of our Board meetings 'offsite' at park or recreation facilities and invite leaders of local citizen groups to speak
- Considerable discussion about these last two topics ensued; eventually, the Board held one of its meetings at a Recreation Department facility (Damascus Recreation Center) and another meeting at a Parks Department facility (Black Hill Regional Park)

Guest Speakers: Parks Department-related Topics*

Overview of Parks Department

Mary Bradford

- Bradford, Director of Department of Parks in Montgomery County, said the departments of parks and recreation are naturally aligned in many ways
- Many Parks Department facilities, such as indoor tennis courts and hockey rinks, are the location of Recreation Department programs
- Department of Parks owns about 34,000 acres of parkland, about 1/10th of all the land in the county
- She described the types of parks in the County including urban, parks, recreational, and regional among other types
- Recreation Advisory Boards can be good source of feedback to, good advocate for the Parks Department

Overview of Damascus/Clarksburg Area Parks

Wendy Hanley

- Hanley, Manager of Little Bennett Regional Park, discussed the full reach of parks she manages in the Damascus-Clarksburg area
- She also discussed the development of hiker/biker trails, campgrounds, soccer fields and softball fields, baseball fields, basketball courts and playgrounds
- Lou Sousa observed that the upcounty area has many more acres of parks, open spaces and forests than downcounty
- Sousa said URRAB should consider these strengths when discussing long term strategic planning issues concerning parks and recreation upcounty
- Hanley agreed that appreciation of our natural resources in Upcounty should be emphasized

Black Hill Regional Park

Jim McMahon

- McMahon, Black Hill Regional Park Manager, provided an overview of Black Hill Regional Park
- He said the park visitor center serves visitors well but the park naturalists need more space to conduct their programs
- Many schools visit the visitor center as part of their science curriculum but the center has insufficient space to house all the students at once so they need to be taught in 'shifts' with some students having to wait outside or on the bus
- He said expanding the building would also enable it to serve as a nature center as well as a visitor center as envisioned when they built it 20 years ago
- He also outlined many of the activities available at the park including boat rentals, biker and hiker trails, and a new playground
- He described maintenance projects such as paving, windows and drains to be completed in the next fiscal year, and a longer term project on one of the major trails in the park, which is being paved

Park Police Operations and Issues

Lt. Linus Louketis

- Lt. Louketis is one of 95 sworn officers in Park Police's Montgomery County Division which also includes 25 civilians

* All statements in this report are excerpted from URRAB's monthly meeting minutes, except Board public testimonies which are provided in full at the end of this report.

- A Chief and two captains oversee two bureaus (support operations and patrol operations 24/7)
- One officer is assigned to each of the 3 upcounty beats (Adam, Baker, Charlie); Charlie is the largest beat and extends all the way to Burtonsville
- The park police have 9 investigators, one for gangs, one for drug enforcement and the rest for property crimes which is the most frequent type of crime in parks
- Crime has risen at South Germantown Rec Park (including Soccerplex and the indoor pool) as valuables are being stolen out of lockers
- The Park Police have a Memo of Understanding with the County Police that provides both forces joint jurisdiction over certain police matters
- The MOU enables Park Police under certain circumstances to issue tickets and arrest warrants outside of Parks while County Police may be called to an incident in a County Park, if Park Police are unable to respond quickly enough
- Louketis said that Park Rangers (who are volunteers) observe and report but have no police powers

Department of Parks Public/Private Partnerships

Terry Brooks

- Brooks, who is Department of Parks Special Projects Coordinator and Chair of Public/Private Partnerships Committee, described his Department's recently adopted policy for Public/Private Partnerships
- Successful public/private partnerships require political leadership, public sector involvement, a plan outlining expectations, good communication among all stakeholders, and selection of the right partner
- A public/private partnership is an agreement involving shared resources among both entities in delivering a service or facility for public use
- Types of partnerships:
 - Adopt a field/playground/facility
 - Operations and maintenance
 - Design-build-donate
 - Lease-design-build-operate
 - Commission investment
- Partnerships enable MNCPPC to provide standardized services and facilities while making efficient use of public resources in an equitable manner
- Partnerships can help overcome Commission staff, budget and other constraints such as the inhibiting effect public processes can have on the adoption of new technologies
- Partnerships can help take advantage of the fact that non-profit entities typically have goals that align with those of the public sector
- A briefing on MNCPPC's partnership policy can be viewed at:
www.mcparkandplanning.org/team/documents/adopted_ppp_policy_91907.pdf

MNCPPC Partnerships: Soccerplex, A Case Study

Trish Heffelfinger

- Heffelfinger, Executive Director of the Maryland Soccer Foundation (MSF), distributed and presented an overview of the Maryland Soccerplex
- MSF entered into a public private partnership with M-NCPPC in 1998
- Soccerplex and the Discovery Sports Center (DSC) opened in late 2000
- MSF built, operates and maintains soccer fields and DSC
- County, state funded roads, utilities, parking lots, water and sewer
- No ongoing county funding except irrigation water subsidy
- MSF contribution: \$17.1 million, County/state: \$10 million
- County developed South Germantown Recreational Park which encloses Soccerplex and DSC

- Annual visitors to South Germantown Rec Park: 1.5 million (including 600,000 to Soccerplex)
- Partnership enabled private investment to accelerate construction of the facility by an estimated 10-15 years
- County-wide economic benefit from soccer tournaments include enhanced sales, hotel tax revenues
- Debt service obligation on the facility is \$1 million/year
- Among threats to MSF's continuing ability to meet this debt obligation include a weak economy with less disposable income, difficulties in filling DSC weekdays, and staff burnout

Guest Speakers: Recreation Department-related Topics

Overview of Montgomery County's Department of Recreation

Gabriel Albornoz

- Albornoz, Director of the Department of Recreation, praised the employees of the Recreation Department for providing top quality services while operating on a shoestring budget
- The Department of Recreation is very high on the County Executive's priority list
- Leggett's initiatives include expanded programs for senior citizens and youths, especially during out-of school time
- Youths are the Department's biggest customer -- almost 30% of youth in Montgomery County participate in Rec Depart programs during the course of the year
- Recreation Department budget will be based on performance measures such as:
 - Improved customer service and
 - Partnerships with colleagues in parks, communities, libraries, law enforcement etc to maximize all departments' resources
- A survey showed that only 40% of residents consider Montgomery County a good place to retire
- About the budget, Albornoz said:
 - One third of the population of the county lives in upcounty
 - There is a \$440 million budget gap
 - There will be a 2% cut across the board
 - CIP plans identify facilities to be renovated; Plum Gar Center is first in line
 - Germantown Master Plan is calling for an additional recreational center in the region
 - There is a push for a smaller, urban type facility offering programs and services on a smaller scale
- The Seneca Valley Sports Academy will be ready in about 3 to 4 weeks
- The Department has been told that new program ideas will be viewed very favorably, if there are partnerships in place
- Keith Miller, Director of the Revenue Authority, is piloting a program where middle school students are picked up after school, dropped off at the golf course, given time for homework, and then play one hour and fifteen minutes of golf
- The Maryland Senior Olympics will be hosted by Montgomery County and over 2000 athletes are expected to attend
- How Can the Board Assist the Recreation Department?
 - Send emails and letters the County Executive and County Council
 - Express upcounty needs at community forums
 - Make phone calls to the County Executive's call-in show
 - Albornoz concluded by emphasizing that his door is always open and to give him a call with whatever concerns anyone may have

Introduction to Damascus Community Recreation Center

Linda Panagoulis

- Panagoulis, Director of the Damascus Recreation Center, said the Center hosts about 6000 people monthly, September through March
- Among many activities include basketball leagues, teen activities, middle school students mentored by staff, 5 Eagle Scout projects, an overnight campout with the after school program, and volleyball
- Trying to get a Single Mom's club together
- Doug Meinberg, Damascus Recreation Coordinator, said the more meaningful activities there are for kids to do, the more positive impact these activities will have on them
- Sandra Kaiser is working with Commander Didone to involve middle school kids in recreation activities before they get to high school

Seneca Valley Sports Academy

John Quarless

- Quarless, Recreation Specialist for the Seneca Valley HS Sports Academy, said that 384 students are registered for the free new program with an average daily attendance of 100
- The Recreation Department's Teen Team provides academic support and recreation activities, including trips and games
- The after school program targets students with low grade point averages though others with higher grades may also attend
- Academic support is a mandatory part of the program
- Activities include board games, videos, table tennis, flag football, Marshall Arts (Tai chai, yoga), homework and pizza
- An officer always present
- The ratio of staff to kids is 1 to 10
- Fisher asked Quarless if plans existed to implement a similar program at other upcounty high schools and Quarless said he was not aware of any at this time

Germantown Police District Police Advisory Board Overview

Capt Tom Didone

- Police Advisory Board set up to promote dialogue, improve communications between people in the communities and Police Dept
- Germantown district will be divided into 9 regions with a representative for each region
- #1 issue in Germantown District is youth related problems
- Larceny from autos is most common problem
- Another upcounty problem is gangs (involving ages 14 to 23)
- Positive activities, such as those offered at County recreation centers, help prevent delinquency

Poolesville Recreation Facility Needs

George Deyo & Doug McKenney

- Deyo, Chairman, Poolesville Parks Recreation and Streets, said his town is looking for a facility big enough to house a gymnasium for music and dances, a movie night, etc.
- The town is looking to acquire 4 acres of land on which to place the building
- Poolesville also wants to build a skate park
- Doug McKenney, another Poolesville PR&S Board member, said there are not enough activities for kids
- County recreation facilities are too far away from for the kids to use them
- Youths lack a safe place to socialize and play after school so they hang around street corners or skateboard on the streets
- Seniors also have no place to socialize
- Stan Fisher urged Deyo and McKenney to see if one their Board members would like to join URRAB in order to help raise the visibility of Poolesville's needs and keep attention focused on these needs
- Lou Sousa said that his Board would support Poolesville's efforts to build a recreation center in that community
- Bob Caverly suggested that perhaps a neighborhood recreation center (somewhat smaller than a community rec center) might be more appropriate for Poolesville because of its smaller population
- Sousa suggested that Deyo and others meet with Sandra Kaiser to discuss using existing public buildings in Poolesville to host Recreation Department programs

Budget Briefings and Topics

Budget Update

Sandra Kaiser

- Kaiser, Recreation Department Liaison to URRAB, said facility planning cost estimates came in quite high for Upcounty and other facilities in the county
- North Potomac Community Center – still on hold-out for land acquisition
- White Oak Community Center will most likely be the next in line for construction
- Upper County Pool – low usage, needs better signage and marketing
- Montgomery Aquatic Center dive tower renovation

FY 09 County Budget Overview

Beryl Feinberg

- Feinberg, Manager of Office of Management and Budget, presented a talk on:
- County Executive's budget priorities and fiscal plan
- Operating budget process for services and facilities
- Results-based budgeting
- FY'09 fiscal outlook

Recreation Department FY 09-14 CIP

Jeffery Bourne

- Bourne, Division Chief, Department of Recreation, spoke about the proposed FY09-14 Capital Improvements Program; highlights included:
- Plum Gar Neighborhood Center proposed renovation
- Replacement of County buildings' roof systems, parking lots, HVAC and electrical systems and elevator systems
- Planning studies underway for Clarksburg and Damascus Community Recreation Aquatic Center including site selection
- Comprehensive Recreation Facilities and Services Development Plan 2010-2030
- Site selection analysis planned for West County Outdoor Pool, Kensington Community Recreation Center, Gilchrist Center

Parks Department FY 09-14 CIP

MaryEllen Venzke

- Venzke, Parks CIP Manager, distributed a packet and talked about the CIP Process. She described:
- What the CIP is
- Key park CIP dates
- How projects get in the CIP
- Typical development CIP projects
- Examples of level-of-effort projects
- Facility planning process
- Land acquisition projects
- How the public can participate
- Typical CIP funding sources
- Factors to consider in developing the CIP
- Executive's readiness criteria, and
- FY 09-14 proposed Parks Department CIP

Department of Recreation FY09 Operating Budget (proposed)

Sandra Kaiser

- Future recreation funding will be based on registrations in County recreation programs through the CLASS system
- Positive Youth Development: Additional recreation center needed in Germantown; upcounty Summer Fun Centers are full with waitlists, except for Damascus; people lined up at the Germantown Indoor Swim Center at 5 a.m. to sign up for Spring Swim lessons classes
- Aquatics: Big increase in pool chemicals costs
- Recreation Regions and Community Centers:
 - Wisconsin Place to open May 2009
 - Additional Summer Fun Centers planned for Olney and Germantown
 - Seasonal staff funding to be cut at community centers for six select days
 - Other changes: Negotiated compensation changes, employee benefit changes, changes due to staff turnover
- Sports, Camps and Classes: Will be under one manager; Youth Sports will be moved to each of the Centers
- Affiliated Recreation Services: Overtime for county wide special events and concerts to be eliminated; Germantown Glory Independence Day Celebration to be cut back
- Teens: Some increased funding planned for Sports Academies, Long Branch Pilot Recreation Program but decreased funding planned for Middle School and Teen Club Programs
- Fixed Costs: Costs of utilities, property insurance, workers' compensation insurance and grants to the cities of Gaithersburg and Takoma Park are increasing
- Administration/Policy Management: Funds added for Maryland Senior Olympics
- Budget Summary: An increase in activity fees has been proposed to help cover the budget shortfall; activities covered include Summer Fun Centers, Aquatic centers, gym memberships, weight and exercise memberships, after school programs, and some Club Fridays
- Some early outs being offered for retirements and some reorganization may occur

Reports

County-wide Recreation Advisory Board Stan Fisher, Member URRAB & CWRAB

Sept

- Some plans that had been dropped such as the Clarksburg/Damascus Community Recreation & Aquatic Center are now back on
- Mr. Albornoz advised we should be looking for public-private partnerships for our programs
- CWRAB will support combining parks and recreation
- Montgomery County hosting Maryland State Senior Olympics in Fall '08; South Germantown Rec Park complex may be involved

Dec

- CWRAB has rewritten its constitution and mission statement and will soon redo its bylaws

Jan

- A Request for Proposal is being sent to potential bidders for the South Germantown Tennis Facility

Feb

- The Gaithersburg Aquatic Center renovation has been postponed due to the budget shortfall
- The Sligo Golf Course renovation has been put on hold

Mar

- Some County Ride-On routes to be eliminated
- Council could not recommend Sligo Creek Golf Course renovation

Apr

- The indoor tennis courts at Cabin John will be renamed after Pauline Addy and dedicated in May
- A Request for Proposal is out for indoor tennis courts to be built at South Germantown Park
- The Korean immigrant community is looking for a place to hold its activities
- Renovations of Good Hope, Scotland, Plum Gar Rec Centers to be pushed up
- Germantown Indoor Swim Center will not close for painting this summer
- Bylaws for the County-wide board call for 15 members and 5 representatives, however not one of the 15 current members is from upcounty

Department of Recreation

Sandra Kaiser, Department of Recreation Board Liaison

Sept

- Tobytown had its Community Day in September; the community has an after school program run by the Recreation Department
- Summer programs included eight Summer Fun Centers, Damascus Days, National Night Out
- Rec Centers were closed for two weeks at the end of August for annual maintenance
- The Germantown Master Plan will be presented to the County Council in October
- Crime statistics in Gaithersburg area exceed those of Silver Spring and Wheaton
- Germantown's Seneca Valley High School will start a Sports Academy in January

Oct

- Senior Olympics to be held in 5 upcounty locations including the South Germantown Recreational Park and Montgomery College
- Recreation Winter Program Guide will have a section about the Rec Centers and their activities
- The Recreation Department provided testimony on behalf of the Park Police for their accreditation at a hearing in September 2007

Nov

- Kaiser said that tonight's meeting was timely as there had been vandalism at the Upper County Community Center; a county van had been shot several times between October 27-29
- Every Department in the county is working towards youth initiatives
- Stan Fisher advocated for Sports Academies for kids who have a 2.0 academic rating, and Kaiser said that a Sports Academy is coming to Seneca Valley High School soon

Apr

- There has been an increase in graffiti in the area surrounding the Upper County Community Center and police are doing more drive-bys in the area
- Tim Truman noted that the neighborhood is also experiencing car vandalism, spray paint on signs, pizza deliveryman robbed, and car break-ins
- County Council recommended an additional Summer Fun Center in the Germantown area
- The County's Historic Society wants to transform a barn on land donated to the Parks Department into a county-wide heritage visitor's center.

May

- Kaiser said that it is becoming more challenging for staff who run the Upcounty Summer Fun Centers to keep the kids interested in activities
- Upcounty Region has eight Summer Fun Centers, all full with waiting lists
- Ten people are retiring from the Recreation Department but the Department can only replace half those employees it loses due to budget constraints

Jun

- The Department is training over 300 seasonal employees for the Summer Fun Centers
- A representative from Linkages to Learning will talk to the youths about peer pressure, bullying and other issues that may come up at camps and schools

Department of Parks

Clare Runkles, Department of Parks Board Liaison

Sept

- Darnestown Square Urban Park: Facility plan approved
- Black Hill Regional Park: Renovation of the existing hardsurface trail from Wisteria to Spinning Wheel on the east side is in design; construction to begin in spring
- Aberdeen Local Park: Work is complete; sand volleyball court was replaced with improved drainage; a gazebo, benches, grills and fenced portapot area were added
- Milton Kaufman Local Park (Montgomery Village): Sediment control ponds are still undergoing evaluation by County Permits
- South Germantown Recreational Park: The Mooseum's renovation bids came in too high; Parks is considering adjustments to the plan and looking for bond bill to help cover costs

- Little Bennett Maintenance Facility: Landscaping, a trail, bike rack, parking and lighting to be added near maintenance facility where new adjacent housing development is to be located; working on the bio-retention pond

Oct

- Arora Hills Local Park is expected to have ballfields, picnic shelters, basketball courts and playground by next Fall
- Clarksburg Local Park: A park/school site with 2 soccer fields is coming; should be a local park with some open space and picnic shelter (maybe a year and a half out)
- King Pond Local Park: The playground location is being studied with the developer
- Black Hill Regional: Spinning Wheel Trail renovation drawings to must be resubmitted to Department of Permitting; work on the Forest Conservation Plan is underway

Dec

- Black Hill Regional: Spinning Wheel Trail still awaiting approval of permits; Forest Conservation Plan is close to approval
- Pennyfield Lock Neighborhood Conservation Area: The replacement boat ramp is in design and will be replaced this summer, upon receiving Permits
- Arora Hills Local Park: Construction has slowed due to the weather; completion expected in the spring
- Little Bennett Regional Park: 125 deer were harvested during the Managed Deer Hunt
- South Germantown Recreational Park: Parks staff provided construction documents for the MD 118 trail connector to the developer for installing the trail and bridge

March

- Arora Hills Local Park: Sodding the outfields, completing the picnic shelters, paving the parking lot and minor work on the fencing
- South Germantown Recreational Park: Request for Proposal for the tennis and fitness center has been advertised

Apr

- South Germantown Recreational Park: Construction of a connecting trail and bridge between the park trail on Rt. 118 is expected to begin in the late summer; the “Mooseum” design is being reviewed to try to reduce costs
- Black Hill Regional Park: Spinning Wheel Trail is still in permits; the Forest Conservation Plan has been approved
- Germantown Towne Center Urban Park: The RFP for design should be advertised in the next few weeks
- Hoyles Mill Community Park: Bids are due May 8 for the installation of the bridge that would bypass the ford
- Woodstock Equestrian Park: Bids are due in April for a design and engineering firm to provide the Facility Plan, Final Design and Construction Documents for the Park’s facilities
- Arora Hills Local Park: Ballfields are being graded, landscaping and paving will take place soon, and final inspections may occur in July
- Dowden’s Ordinary Special Park: Review drawings expected in next few weeks

May

- The large turnout at the Iranian Festival in Black Hill Regional Park forced Park managers to close the park to new visitors in the early afternoon while more visitors were still trying to get in

Jun

- Ovid Hazen Wells Recreational Park: The asphalt trail and pedestrian bridge have been installed; the Red Wiggler solar house and septic system construction should be completed this summer
- Darnestown Square Urban Park: Staff is preparing an RFP for final design which will be advertised in the fall
- Black Hill Regional Park: Crystal Rock Trail Boardwalk ramp connector construction began early this month; Spinning Wheel Trail Forest Conservation Plan is approved but awaiting final permits from DPS
- Seneca Crossing Local Park: Staff is preparing an RFP for the facility plan which will be advertised in the fall.
- Green Farm Community Park: The natural surface trail will be installed this summer by staff; the developer will install a driveway entrance and pond; trailhead parking, school bus drop-off and a kiosk, and native plant demonstration are planned
- Big Pines Local Park: A new sidewalk and bikeway will be installed after the contractor relocates the utilities
- Seneca Landing Special Park: There is a partnership for a concessionaire to offer personal watercraft so he's providing a floating dock with handicapped access path and parking space
- Woodstock Equestrian Park: Repairs are needed to the JEB Stuart Trail and the maintenance vehicle bridge over Little Monocacy Tributary; a contractor will soon begin work on the historic Seneca stone barn in the park which will include stabilization, repair of the stone walls and foundation, repair/replacement of the metal roof, and restoration of the interior structure and floors

Upcounty Citizens Advisory Board Report**Joel Cockrell, UCAB Board Liaison****Oct**

- A new youth academy is coming to the Seneca Valley High School in January
- UCAB is going to spend much time this year on youth initiatives and gang prevention

Dec

- UCAB is surveying middle/high school students in Damascus, Rocky Hill and Gaithersburg about their out of school activities

Feb

- The principal at Baker Middle School said the kids are not adequately informed about all the offerings at the Damascus Community Recreation Center
- Some homes no longer get the Recreation Guide
- Mary Bradford said some new residents do not get the Guide; she would like to see if the *Gazette* could publish the program guide as an insert in their papers

Mar

- Social Issues committee works with positive youth development; has been talking to PTA's and staff of the middle and high schools
- Recommended an Activity Fair for kids to know what is available
- Trying to channel kids into activities to prevent drugs and crime

Open Discussion

Board Priorities

October

- Lou Sousa said the purpose of URRAB is to advise County officials about the need for any changes to parks or recreation facilities or programs
- He said that he would like to use our meetings as forums to:
 - Improve Board members knowledge of the parks and recreation “enterprise” in our region
 - Improve URRAB knowledge of Upcounty citizens’ interests and concerns about parks and recreation in our region
 - Insure that Upcounty citizens receive their fair share of Montgomery County parks and recreation resources and services
 - Learn about how to best influence the Montgomery County Government on parks and recreation in our region
- Sousa proposed that speakers from the Recreation and Parks Departments come to our meetings and brief the Board on topics and issues of interest to us
- Sousa asked if a speaker could outline how URRAB might plan its testimony to align with County Government budget cycle hearings

December

- Lou Sousa said that he would be briefing County Executive Ike Leggett about Parks and Recreation in the upcounty and asked the Board members for their topic ideas
- Dan Johnston would like more facilities in Darnestown
- Tim Truman would like Upper County Community Center renovation to begin
- John Cabrera would like programs to be increased for middle and high school youth as well as for senior residents
- Dipali Shah said more park space and bike paths are needed in her neighborhood
- Ed Socha said he would like to see more golf courses
- Stan Fisher recommended the following for Capital Improvement Projects:
 - Poolesville Recreation Center and Pool
 - Clarksburg Recreation Center and Pool
 - Darnestown Community Recreation Center
- Sousa pointed out that the three Nature Centers in the County are all downcounty, and he would like to see a nature center and/or a visitor center in the Little Bennett Park as provided for in that park’s Master Plan
- Truman suggested the need for more promotional marketing for upcounty park facilities
- Fisher suggested more advertising for the Oktoberfest and Fourth of July; he would like to promote the Visitor Center of Black Hills more
- Sousa suggested that the Board’s list should be prioritized, and he would put together a form that would enable the Board to vote on its priorities

January

- Lou Sousa distributed a spreadsheet of potential URRAB CIP projects as listed in the FY 07 Annual Report to all board members
- Members were asked to rank their top 10 priorities
- Sousa collected all the ‘votes’ and said he would tally them and use them to help prepare his remarks to the County Executive

February

- Lou Sousa distributed a copy of the Board's collective CIP priorities based on the vote they had taken at the previous month's meeting (**see page 21 of this report**); he said that:
 - The large quantity of Park acreage in the upcounty was an attractive feature of our region that should be emphasized in the briefing
 - Little Bennett, the biggest park of five regional parks in the county, needs a nature center, park naturalist, and improved trails
 - Black Hills has a wonderful visitor center but needs more class space for students whose school curriculum sends them to the center
 - Nature centers and more trails in upcounty parks are needed to enable all county residents to better enjoy and benefit from all their great upcounty park acreage
 - Better promotion of our parks and natural resources is needed for residents to get the most out of them
- Sandra Kaiser said we should support:
 - A Recreation Department initiative towards after school youth activities
 - Recreational facilities for out-of-school activities
 - Facility planning for a recreation and swim center in Clarksburg
 - Renovation of the Plum Gar Neighborhood Center
 - A new recreation center in the Germantown Master plan
 - Renovation of the Gaithersburg Upcounty Recreation Center
- Bob Caverly supported:
 - More/better transportation to parks and recreation facilities
 - A 50 meter pool for the new Clarksburg swim center
 - Renovation of Plum Gar Recreation Center
- John Cabrera supported more emphasis on our youth and more facilities and transportation to keep up with our growing upcounty population
- Stan Fisher supported putting the East Germantown and Poolesville Recreation Centers back into the CIP
- Dipali Shah volunteered to help Sousa create a power point presentation for the County Executive

March

- Lou Sousa distributed the briefing he gave Mr. Leggett at the CIP hearing February 28, 2008 and thanked Dipali Shah for her help in preparing it
- Sousa said that Leggett noted that the County faces a budget deficit with many high priority needs such as schools and community safety issues suggesting that parks and recreation face strong competition in meeting their CIP needs
- Ed Socha said we should track progress of our priority projects
- Sandra Kaiser said we could highlight one or two priorities that have already been presented as the most important
- Joel Cockrell said that the Board should pushing its short term priorities and complain about projects being advance outside our region; he said we emphasize that we need more recreation centers upcounty at every opportunity the Board has
- Sandra Kaiser said that we not only have capital project priorities and should not lose sight of the operating needs
- Sousa said a new recreation center is planned for Darnestown but no plans exist for one in Poolesville; Sandra Kaiser pointed out that land on which to build the Darnestown center has not yet been acquired
- Clare Runkles said the Department of Recreation has been looking for funding for a recreation center in the Darnestown/North Potomac area for 4 or 5 years

- Dan Johnston, who lives in Darnestown, said he has a Gaithersburg address but incurs an additional fee when using Gaithersburg recreation facilities because he is not a “city” resident
- Stan Fisher said we should build another recreation center instead of waiting for a center in Darnestown
- Cockrell suggested that we have someone brief us on the Darnestown Center project to help the Board determine what the strategy should be in acquiring the land; Board members discussed looking for another site
- Fisher questioned the disappearance of the plans for the Poolesville Recreation Center; Kaiser said Poolesville was in the 20 year Department of Recreation plan but not in the CIP
- Sousa suggested we invite people from the Poolesville area to the Board meeting to see if there is support from that area for a recreation facility; Fisher felt that Poolesville is not getting its fair share of the County budget

Are Upcounty Residents Under-served in Terms of Parks and Recreation?

- There was considerable discussion about a report Board member (and former Board Chair) Stan Fisher had prepared for the Board in the Spring ‘07
- It contained statistics that seemed to demonstrate that upcounty residents receive less in terms of Parks and Recreation programs and facilities than do downcounty residents
- This topic—how well do upcounty residents fare in parks and recreation compared to downcounty residents—would be discussed at many URRAB meetings in FY08
- Fisher’s report showed that the County Recreation Department program guide contained far fewer program opportunities for upcounty residents than for residents in the rest of the county
- URRAB members acknowledged that this is at least partially because much of the upcounty’s growth is fairly recent (over the last 10-15 years) and public facilities haven’t caught up with the population yet
- Fewer recreation and parks facilities means that there are fewer buildings in which to hold programs and residents must drive further distances which both contribute to fewer offerings
- Bob Caverly said that if URRAB highlighted these data to other parties, we would more likely get answers and attention

“Around the Table”

October

- Ed Socha said the Montgomery County Revenue Authority is going to provide discounted fees to its courses through web-based tee time email specials
- Socha said women’s professional soccer is returning; the Washington Freedom will use the Soccerplex as its homefield starting in 2009

November

- Sandra Kaiser said it would not be feasible to hold URRAB meetings outside the Regional Services Center in Germantown due to logistics problems
- Lou Sousa said that at the end of all future Board meetings he would go around the table to get members’ ideas for topics and speakers at future URRAB meetings

January

- Joel Cockrell suggested that Board members could push their priorities by sending letters or emails to the County Executive and the Gazette, and participating in the operating budget forum

April

- Lou Sousa reminded Board members that going around the table gives everyone a chance to suggest topics or speakers for future meetings
- Board elections will take place at the June meeting
- It was decided to hold the meeting at Black Hill Regional Park
- Sandra Kaiser and Bob Caverly said they would invite Trish Heffelfinger (Soccerplex), Pam Ambrose (Germantown Indoor Swim Center), and Robin Riley (Dept of Recreation) to speak at one of URRAB's future meetings
- Kaiser said that members of the public may attend our Board meetings to observe but they need to be on our agenda to participate
- Caverly suggested having Mike Knapp attend a Board meeting though Kaiser said we would need to first send him a list of topics if we are to invite him

May

- Lou Sousa asked for volunteers to help on URRAB's FY08 Annual Report; Dipali Shah and Valerie Oliver offered to help; Sousa said they would work on the report after they received minutes for all the meetings
- Sousa also asked for volunteers for URRAB's Officer Nominating Committee for FY09; Tim Truman and Ed Socha volunteered to be on the committee
- Sousa said that officer elections would be held at June meeting which would be at Black Hill Regional Park; Jim McMahon, BHRP Park Manager, would be a guest speaker

June

- Annual URRAB Picnic; the Board met and held its annual picnic at Black Hill Regional Park at a shelter near the Visitor Center; each participant brought a dish and Dan Johnston was the chief chef at the grill
- Board Election: Ed Socha and Tim Truman were nominated for the positions of URRAB Board Chairman and Vice Chairman, respectively; Lou Sousa seconded the nominations, asked if there were any other nominations and there were none; a Board vote then confirmed the two nominees to their new positions
- Ed Socha reminded Board members to send him any topic or speaker ideas for the September meeting
- Bob Caverly said he would like to have Pam Ambrose, Recreation Supervisor of the Germantown Indoor Swim Center, talk to the Board in September
- Stan Fisher said that the online ParkPass registration process for Park programs was cumbersome and he would like to be able to register by speaking to a live person over the phone

URRAB's CIP Priorities

Potential Upcounty Project	Number of Responses										Score <u>1</u> /
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Clarksburg Recreation Center		1	1	1		2					34
East Germantown Rec Center	2	1	1							1	38
Poolesville Recreation Center		1					1			1	14
Indoor tennis facility		1			1		1				19
Indoor ice skating facility				1				1			10
Damas./C-burg indr swim ctr	1		1	1	1			1			34
Poolesville indr swim center					1						6
Ball fields and soccer fields							1		1		6
Little Bennett nature center	1	1	1	1		1					39
Little Bennett trails rebuilt	2	1			1		1				39
Germantown local park	1										10
Black Hls visitor ctr expans		1		2	1				1		31
Arboretums/gardens				1					1	1	10
Senior Center						1	1	1		1	13
Bike and Hiking Trails			3					1			27
Disc golf course					1						6
Firearms safety facility											--
Begin/intermed golf course						1					5

1/ 10 points for each #1 vote, 9 points for each #2 vote, 1point for each #10 vote etc.

Germantown Master Plan Community Hearing
Statement from Upcounty Region Recreation Advisory Board
By Lou Sousa, Chairman, URRAB
December 17, 2007

Hello, my name is Lou Sousa, and I live at 26201 Prescott Road in Clarksburg, MD. I am the Chairman of the Upcounty Region Recreation Advisory Board. We strongly endorse the Germantown Master Plan's recommendation for a recreation center to serve the eastern side of I-270.

For over two decades the Plum Gar Center has helped play this role by serving not only the recreation but also other community needs for county residents in east Germantown as well as nearby neighbors in Gaithersburg and Clarksburg. In the meantime, the area served by the Center has grown sharply and continuously as Germantown has nearly doubled its population of about 40,000 when Plum Gar first opened to its current level approaching 80,000 residents. While the Germantown Recreation Center will serves residents who live west of 270, residents who live in the part of the town east of the interstate unfortunately are forced to cope with a much smaller and inferior facility.

The tiny 6800 square foot Plum Gar building, which records over 70,000 visits a year, is highly inadequate when the County's own Recreation Facilities plan calls for a 33,000 square foot facility for every 30,000 residents.

Walk through the building on any given weeknight and you're likely to find a group doing Thai Chi in one corner of the building's gym, ping pong being played in another, and mahjong in yet a third while line dancing and crafts are spread throughout the large room.

Parents must line the sidelines during basketball games in the Center and cram into the small lobby to try to get a glimpse of their children.

And the lack of a larger and more adequate space for the kids to go after school and on the weekends contributes to youth problems. According to a police report, there are youth gangs in the neighborhoods around Plum Gar. A larger and more adequate center would provide a healthy outlet for young people and help channel their energies in positive directions rather than delinquency or crime.

There are only two bathrooms in Plum Gar to serve not only users of the building but its staff as well. And summer camps held in the building may host as many as 100 or more children. Moreover, neither bathroom has a secondary door to hide the toilet when the door opens to the hallway.

In addition to new bathrooms, the building needs enhanced security, more storage, a bigger kitchen, and more parking space.

A recreation center in the eastern part of Germantown should be a public indoor space of sufficient size and quality to enable community residents to assemble, mingle and participate in special celebrations or social gatherings as can be done at most other recreation department community centers.

It should enable residents to participate more fully in indoor sports, fitness, dance, music, art or many of the numerous other excellent programs offered by the county's Recreation Department in its Program Guide than they currently can at Plum Gar.

The Germantown Master Plan's recommendation does NOT indicate whether Plum Gar should be expanded and renovated.

Or a new greenfield center should be built to replace it.

Or a new greenfield center should be built to supplement Plum Gar.

However, in either case we believe that a new recreation center or a thoroughly renovated and expanded Plum Gar Center is long overdue for residents of the area. The Upcounty Region Recreation Advisory Board strongly supports the Germantown Master Plan's recommendation for a recreation center in east Germantown, and we look forward to its inclusion in the Recreation Department's next CIP plan.

Thank you.

Montgomery County Council Hearing on FY09-14 CIP
Statement from Upcounty Region Recreation Advisory Board
By Tim Truman, Vice Chairman, URRAB
February 5, 2008

My name is Tim Truman, and I am the Vice Chairman of the Upcounty Region Recreation Advisory Board -- or URRAB as we call it. I'd like to first thank the Montgomery County Council members for the opportunity for URRAB to offer its priorities on the County Executive's proposed FY09-14 capital improvement plan. URRAB is comprised of nine volunteers who live in towns across the upcounty. Our budget priorities include:

#1: Implementing the Little Bennett Master Plan by providing FY09 funding support to start work on the Park's gateway entrance area and to rebuild the multi-use trails in Little Bennett so they are less prone to erosion. Currently, Little Bennett -- the county's most pristine and natural park -- is the only one among the County's five regional parks without a nature center, a naturalist, or even a central public entrance or parking area. Hence, we would like to see the proposed gateway area parking lot and picnic pavilion that were shifted back to FY10 start dates be restored to their original FY09 start dates. Also, with more than 23 miles of trails, Little Bennett is the county's signature park for walking and riding. But the increased use of these trails that will accompany Clarksburg's build out and the fragile nature of the Park's ecosystem demand that we rebuild its hilly trails to minimize erosion, as called for in the master plan.

Our second priority is to help address the fact that the rapid growth in upcounty population has not yet been matched by the construction of new county recreation facilities able to meet our citizens' recreation needs. To help correct this imbalance, we strongly support moving forward with:

- Renovation and expansion of the Plum Gar Recreation Center in Germantown;
- Construction of the new recreation center in Darnestown as proposed in the CIP;
- And conduction of preliminary planning studies for:
 - A new recreation center in East Germantown as proposed in the city's new master plan;
 - The proposed Clarksburg Community Recreation Center; and,
 - An upcounty indoor swim center for citizens who live east of I-270 and currently lack access to any nearby public indoor swim facility.

Our third priority is to fund an expansion of the Black Hills Park visitor center so that it can keep pace with the demand for its services caused by the growth in Germantown and other upcounty communities.

Finally, we would like to see continued strengthening of the Park Department's trails budget. The combined acreage of all the great parks around the upcounty represents the principal strength our region brings to the County's total recreation picture. Therefore, we would like to see enhanced support for trails and bikeways to connect these parks into a more integrated network. We were very disappointed to see the proposed Magruder Branch trail extension in Damascus cut out of the County Budget and we would very much like to see this item restored. Thank you.

Briefing to Montgomery County Executive, Isiah Leggett
Statement from Upcounty Region Recreation Advisory Board
By Lou Sousa, Chairman, URRAB
February 26, 20087

Hello, Mr. Leggett.

My name is Lou Sousa. I'm the Chairman of the Upcounty Region Recreation Advisory Board. A County resident since 1972, I've lived in Clarksburg since 2001. For the past 10 years or so I've been doing a lot of weekend hiking to try to control my weight. I've learned there are a lot great parks and other public places to hike in the upcounty.

When you look at a map of the upcounty region and adjacent Frederick public lands, you can see nine public parks that are each at least 1500 acres in size. Seneca Creek and other greenways are linking many of these great parks into a continuous interconnected park system. Taken altogether Federal, State and County public parklands upcounty and adjacent to our borders total almost 33,000 acres—50% more than the estimated 22,000 acres of parkland in the rest of the county.

Our great parks upcounty help benefit our citizens in many ways. First, there's the simple enjoyment of nature that you can only get in a large park environment like the several we have around upcounty. Then, as I know from personal experience, regular park use can help you stay physically fit. The spacious upcounty parks are also especially great for getting away from all the stress of the workday world. Also, our big upcounty parks are a great place for today's too indoor-focused young people to learn about the great outdoors and the many discoveries and adventures to be found there. And finally we cannot forget the huge and increasingly valuable environmental benefit we get from our heavily vegetated parks. They help convert carbon dioxide—the greenhouse gas created by our cars and power plants—into breathable oxygen and plant growth. Sort of like the 'lungs of Montgomery county.'

What are URRAB's priorities and recommendations for our great upcounty parks?

First, we think, for the public to get maximum benefit from our upcounty parks, we need to improve awareness of what's in them. 'Wild Montgomery' is a new Parks Department website that helps users find everything from refuges for wild species to respites for residents. We should do more things like this to get our residents and children outdoors and into our parks.

Once we've got their interest in visiting our parks, we need to consider the routes visitors take to get to them. The county should more aggressively pursue integration of our upcounty parks thru natural and hard surface trails as proposed in the countywide park trails plan. We should also explore adding more routes to the plan, including possible bike paths along roads thru the upcounty.

Once in the parks, our shift turns to park trails. We are very fortunate to have many miles of trails in upcounty parks. Because we value and take pride in our trails, we like to maintain their condition. Our major trail priority is to implement the Little Bennett Park master plan by rebuilding the eroding trails in the park into a sustainable loop trail network.

To enhance our park visitors' experience while in our parks, we need to provide informative and engaging nature centers. Despite all the great park acreage in the upcounty, the score on County nature centers is Downcounty 3, upcounty 0.

One of our upcounty parks, Black Hills, has a very nice visitor center. It employs 3 naturalists. But the demand for its naturalist offerings cannot be met with existing space and at least two classrooms should be added to the building.

The situation in our other big regional upcounty park, Little Bennett, is more primitive. Of the five big regional parks in the county, Little Bennett is the only one without a nature center, naturalist, or even a central public entrance or parking area. URRAB's priority is to initiate facility planning for the Little Bennett gateway entrance area sometime during the FY09-14 CIP.

Now let's turn to the recreation side of things. While the upcounty leads in park acreage, when it comes to park and recreation facilities, upcounty lags behind. Among county recreation centers, the upcounty, with up to 1/3 of the county's population, lags with a score of Rest of the County 13 to Upcounty's 4. In indoor ice rinks and tennis courts, we're totally shut out, 4 to 0.

Fewer upcounty recreation and park facilities translate directly into fewer program offerings for upcounty residents. With up to 1/3 of the county's population, upcounty gets only about 19% of recreation department classes.

The good news is the FY09-14 CIP addresses a few of the upcounty's major recreation facility needs. The Plum Gar Neighborhood Recreation Center is slated for a \$1.6 million renovation and expansion. A new 33,000ft² Community Recreation Center will be built in North Potomac. And site selection and facility planning are planned for a Clarksburg/Damascus Community Recreation and Aquatic Center. URRAB welcomes these planned facilities to our region and will closely monitor progress on these plans in the future.

But other major upcounty recreation facility needs remain unaddressed. URRAB recommends that the existing and future community recreation needs of Germantown, Gaithersburg and Poolesville be explored, and facility planning initiated for each at some point in the FY09-14 CIP.

Thank you.

Montgomery County Council Hearing on FY09 Operating Budget
Statement from Upcounty Region Recreation Advisory Board
Tim Truman, Vice Chairman, URRAB
April 10, 2008

Good evening Chairman Knapp and esteemed members of the County Council.

My name is Tim Truman and I am the Vice Chairman of the Upcounty Region Recreation Advisory Board. I'd like to thank the Council members for providing this opportunity for our board to offer its priorities regarding the Department of Recreation in the County Executive's FY09 Operating Budget.

The Upcounty region continues to be the fastest growing section of Montgomery County. Development has already outpaced the recreational and park services needed for the citizens in the Upcounty. After school programs and summer fun centers are vital programs for our youth and are in need of expansion and funding. The recreational needs of the population of the Upcounty are currently underserved and future needs must be anticipated now.

Our board's top priority issues relative to the FY09 Operating Budget are:

- After school programs – these vital programs require additional staff and seasonal budgets.
- Summer youth programs – summer programs, especially summer fun centers, are more popular than ever, and more staff and resources are required to open additional programs with extended hours.
- Funding seasonal staff – additional funding for the seasonal staff is required to meet the expanding recreational needs of Upcounty citizens.
- Public Safety – any increase in usage of Upcounty parks and recreation facilities leads to an increased need for park police that patrol these areas and keep our citizens safe.

After School Programs

Funding after school programs will directly help keep our youth population out of the streets and engage them in organized recreational activities during the critical time between the end of formal school sessions and the time they return home. These programs support the County Executive's Positive Youth Development initiative and remain our board's top priority in this budget cycle.

The Club Friday programs sponsored by two Upcounty facilities are shining examples of after school activities that should be expanded. Currently, the Upper County and Germantown recreation centers host successful Club Friday programs. These twice-monthly programs provide middle school aged children with something to do on Friday evenings. Activities range from movie nights to pizza parties and "Dance Revolution" contests. We support funding new Club Friday programs at the Damascus and Plum Gar facilities that are currently missing out on this opportunity to serve Upcounty youth.

We are proud to note that Germantown in the Upcounty region is a targeted area for the Community-Based Collaboration Council Positive Youth Initiative. Our Board and Department of Recreation staff is working closely with the Collaboration Council and our counterparts on the Upcounty Citizens Advisory Board to provide positive, out-of-school activities for middle- and high-school youths.

Our board supports the proposed increased fees for the after school programs for children in grades K-5 in our community centers. Although the fees will provide for additional revenue, additional funding is needed to support programs for middle and high school youth at the centers.

Summer Youth Programs

With the end of the school year right around the corner, Upcounty residents will be looking for opportunities that will keep their children and youth safe and active this summer.

The eight Summer Fun Centers in the Upcounty region remain a popular destination for youth ages 5 to 13. We are pleased that an additional Summer Fun Center in Germantown was recommended for funding in the FY09 operating budget. The popularity of this activity can be easily identified as registration for this summer's program in the Germantown area reached full capacity within two weeks of the enrollment period.

Plum Gar Community Center and the Upper County Community Center met its maximum registration allowance within two weeks, and both facilities each now have wait lists of more than 20 individuals. The Germantown Elementary School site, Roberto Clemente Middle School, Martin Luther King Middle School, and the Emory Grove Center are also full to capacity with wait lists. Out of this list, only the Germantown Elementary School and the Emory Grove Center will be staffed to accommodate extended hours.

In 2007, two Upcounty sites offered additional extended hours and these filled immediately. Attendance was limited at certain other locations due to the fact that extended hours were not available at all of the centers.

We feel the popularity of these summer fun centers proves that additional programs should be launched in the Upcounty region, and consideration should be given to keeping the existing centers open for longer hours.

Funding Seasonal Staff

Because overall community center staff budgets are so tight, staff to adequately supervise after school programs and cover other center needs is at a bare minimum. Adding to the seasonal staff budget at each center will provide a structured, supervised program for our youth population at a relatively low cost.

In addition, the seasonal staff can have a major impact on an important revenue stream of all recreational facilities, especially rentals. It can be argued that having additional staff on hand provides for enhanced customer service, which is a critical factor when deciding on a venue for special events.

Our Board does not support the proposal to reduce seasonal staff funding at community centers on six select days during FY09. Any reduction in staff – even a temporary one – can lead to decreased customer service and possibly create a public safety issue in our facilities.

Public Safety

The Upcounty needs more Park Police to cover the existing, recently completed, and planned facilities in our region. We understand that the Park Police requested an increase in the authorized staffing level by four officers, but only one officer position was requested in the final budget.

The continued increase in usage of Upcounty parks and recreation facilities leads to an increased need for Park Police that patrol these areas and keep our citizens safe. We urge you to support the request for additional personnel, that will allow the Park Police to better deploy its officers and enhance public safety in our facilities.

Conclusion

We are convinced that providing adequate recreation facilities and programs fully supports the County Executive's Positive Youth Development initiative, and we urge you to support our request to continue

funding:

- After school programs such as Club Friday;
- The Summer Fun Youth Centers;
- Seasonal staff at community centers; and,
- Additional park police positions.

Thank you for your time and consideration.